

Gila River governor recall election today

[By Doug Murphy | AFN](#)

June 19, 2008 - 5:16PM

Gila River Indian Community members will cast their votes today in a special recall election that may decide the political future of tribal Governor William R. Rhodes.

It could also have an impact on tribal opposition to allowing the South Mountain Loop 202 on indian land.

Rhodes has been an apparent supporter of at least allowing a vote on the freeway, while the tribal council has consistently supported resolutions opposing a freeway on Indian land.

The recall was approved by the tribal council in a 10 to 6 vote last month, despite concerns that recall petitions didn't contain enough valid signatures.

According to the tribe's newspaper, the council's Legislative Standing Committee that oversees recall elections wanted to audit all 494 signatures to make sure that the 373 needed to force a recall were valid. Instead, the council approved today's recall election.

Tribal officials declined to speak on the record about the recall, but Rhodes wrote in an election statement that his campaign platform was to eliminate corruption and that opponents are alleging misconduct that never existed.

Recall supporters in their written statement say that Rhodes illegally terminated employees in violation of tribal policy and that then illegally appointed unqualified replacements.

Rhodes was elected in 2005 with 1,863 votes to the three-year term that ends this year and, from the beginning, his administration has battled the tribal council.

Immediately after taking office, in what he called an effort to eliminate unproductive employees, Rhodes replaced most of the tribe's department heads. He also pushed for the tribal-wide vote on the South Mountain Loop 202 freeway.

Just months after being elected, the council suspended Rhodes from office for three weeks for undisclosed reasons after receiving an internal audit of the events surrounding the firing and replacement of the department heads.

Rhodes, a U.S. Navy veteran of the Korean War, was the tribe's first volunteer fire chief. He also served nine years in law enforcement and was the tribal court's Chief Judge from 1999 until being elected governor.

Contact writer: (480) 898-7914 or dmurphy@ahwatukee.com.